

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 SANTIA 03272 212133Z
ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4463

S E C R E T SANTIAGO 3272

EXDIS

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E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, CI
SUBJECT: CHILEAN AIR FORCE AND NAVY OPPOSES PINOCHET POWER PLAY

REF: SANTIAGO 3154

1. AT SOCIAL FUNCTION APRIL 20, AIR FORCE GENERAL FERNANDO MATTHEI, MINISTER OF HEALTH AND A GOOD FRIEND, GAVE ME FURTHER DETAILS WITH RESPECT TO OPPOSITION WITHIN THE MILITARY TO PRESIDENT PINOCHET'S EFFORT TO FREE HIMSELF FROM THE NECESSITY OF COOPERATING WITH OTHER JUNTA MEMBERS, AND TO PERPETUATE HIS PRESIDENCY, OR THAT OF ANOTHER ARMY GENERAL.
 2. DESCRIBING PINOCHET'S PLOY AS AN EFFORT TO SET UP "A LIFETIME AND HEREDITARY PRESIDENCY", MATTHEI SAID THAT THE SOLIDARITY OF ALL THE AIR FORCE SENIOR OFFICERS IN SUPPORT OF AIR FORCE COMMANDER GENERAL LEIGH'S OPPOSITION HAD AGAIN BEEN MADE MINIFEST AT A MEETING OF AIR FORCE OFFICERS APRIL 11. FURTHER, GENERAL LEIGH HAD PREPARED A RESPECTFUL BUT FIRM LETTER TO PINOCHET STATING THE AIR FORCE OBJECTIONS TO ANY CHANGE IN THE POWERS AND FUNCTIONS OF THE JUNTA.
 3. MATTHEI ADDED THAT SENIOR CHILEAN NAVY OFFICERS HAD GONE THROUGH
SECRET

SECRET
- PAGE 02 SANTIA 03272 212133Z
- A SIMILAR EXERCISE. A LETTER HAD BEEN PREPARED, COUCHED IN MORE ABUSIVE TERMS, BUT APPARENTLY NOT YET PASSED TO PINOCHET.
4. I ASKED GENERAL MATTHEI WHETHER, AS PREVIOUSLY INDICATED, THE AIR FORCE WOULD WITHDRAW FROM PARTICIPATION IN THE GOVERNMENT IF PINOCHET SUCCEEDED IN CEMENTING HIS POSITION AS HE DESIRED. MATTHEI CONFIRMED THAT THIS WAS THE PROJECTED SCENARIO

AND SAID THAT BOTH AIR FORCE AND NAVY OFFICERS WOULD LEAVE THE GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE, BUT WOULD LIMIT THEMSELVES TO THIS ACT OF "PASSIVE OPPOSITION". HOW LIKELY WAS THIS DEVELOPMENT, I WONDERED. HE THOUGHT IT WAS QUITE UNLIKELY. IN HIS VIEW THE UNITED OPPOSITION OF THE TWO SERVICES WILL SUFFICE TO RESTRAIN PINOCHET'S DESIRES.
POPPER

SECRET

NNN

Message Attributes

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